

## **SUMMARY OF SAVANNAH- CHATHAM COUNTY PUBLIC MEETING**

### **GDOT Truck Lane Needs Identification Study – May 15, 2007 Coastal Georgia Center – Savannah, Georgia**

The first Savannah area public meeting for the GDOT Truck Lane Needs Identification Study was held at the Coastal Georgia Center in Savannah, GA on May 15, 2007 beginning at approximately 5:05 PM. Matthew Fowler, GDOT Planning, welcomed the group. He turned the floor over to Andrew Smith, Consultant Project Manager for HNTB.

Mr. Smith started the meeting by introducing the project video and presentation. Mr. Smith discussed the agenda and gave an overview of today's meeting. He said that the study is at the halfway point and that the most promising segments for truck only lanes on Georgia's highways have been identified. He then explained that a video with 3-D animation was created to help people visualize the truck only lanes concept. The video was then played.

After the video, Mr. Smith continued with the PowerPoint presentation. He touched on the Guiding Principles of the study. At this point, Marc Cutler was introduced to talk about the data collection.

Mr. Cutler began by stating the types of data that was used: GDOT traffic counts, the crash/accident database, O/D surveys, and a national database, the TRANSEARCH database. He said that the amount of truck traffic passing through the state accounts for one third of total trips. Georgia's trading partners are the neighboring states and the map shown indicated the truck travel between states.

Mr. Cutler then discussed the results of the crash analysis; that is, how do truck accidents compare to auto accidents. The data indicated that trucks have roughly the same amount of crashes as autos, though the more severe accidents, fatal accidents, involve trucks.

A parking analysis was also conducted and Mr. Cutler explained that trucks sometimes have no choice but to park on ramps and shoulders. If truckers do not take their mandatory rest breaks, this too can be a safety hazard to the motoring public.

Mr. Cutler presented a congestion summary for 2035. He stated that by building truck lanes, we are making a measurable difference on congestion. Modal diversion is important in easing congestion. At more than 500 miles, rail becomes an attractive alternative for shipping, but investment is needed in both systems.

Mr. Cutler introduced the key candidate segments were moved forward to Phase 2. The number one segment was the corridor segment of I-75 between Chattanooga and Macon. Truck lanes also appear to have merit in Savannah, specifically in the vicinity of the Port, I-95, and I-16, due to the large amount of distribution and warehousing activities in this area.

At this point, Mr. Cutler turned the floor back over to Mr. Smith, who then discussed the evaluation framework.

Mr. Smith said as we start to piece together the different factors that help determine if truck lanes are warranted, you start to see that the conditions are ripe for investment in some areas. He discussed the three network scenarios that showed an investment in truck lanes leads to

more efficient travel and that this has a positive impact on congestion. Moving from a LOS E to LOS D is a significant difference. (LOS stands for Level of Service.)

Mr. Smith then identified the 3 distinct highway segments that emerged as recommendations for truck only lanes: I-75, Tennessee state line to Macon; the radial freeways of I-85 and I-20; and the Chatham County-Savannah area. In the Chatham County-Savannah area, off-interstate improvements including new facilities connecting the Interstate to the Port, are under consideration.

Mr. Smith wrapped up the presentation portion of the meeting by discussing the next steps of the study. He said we will look at where we should be providing access, investigating the engineering work that needs to be done – are truck only lanes possible to construct?, and determining the cost/benefit. The study is scheduled to be completed in October of this year.

At this point, Mr. Smith opened the floor for questions.

C: An attendee commented that the problem on the Interstate is slow passenger cars that drive in the right and left hand lanes

Q: Is the study looking at tying into the newly proposed inland port project in Dublin, Georgia?

A: The Dublin inland port is a relatively new idea and not a true project that is on the books, therefore, it is not currently under consideration.

Q: Will the study consider building new facilities – truck only roads? What happened to the Corridor Z project that looked at coming across South Georgia?

A: This study focuses on existing Interstate corridors because there is already some right of way available and some impacts can be mitigated. The exception is in the area near the Port of Savannah, where new facilities are under consideration. Corridor Z is the U. S. 84 Corridor, which was widened as part of the Governor's Road Improvement Program (GRIP) and extends to Southwest Georgia.

Q: What is an HPP (High Priority Project)?

A: This is a federal designation that has been given to some corridors with known road improvement issues to address. It relates to eligibility for certain funds and programs.

Q: Are you looking at local improvements? There are issues in the vicinity of the new Savannah River International Trade Park at S.R. 21 and I-95.

A: We are considering local investment to facilitate truck movements and address truck issues in the warehousing/distribution areas between I-95, I-16, I-516, and the Savannah River. Other local improvements can be discussed with the area Metropolitan Planning Organization – the Chatham Urban Transportation Study (CUTS). GDOT has an additional study, the Chatham County Interstate Needs Analysis and Prioritization Plan, which includes recommended improvements to some of the interchanges including I-95 and S.R. 21.

Q: How much will this cost and how will it be paid for?

A: We will be looking at costs in this phase of the study. Since this is a feasibility study, we do not yet have answers to all of the policy questions, but there will be various funding options to consider.

Q: When will the truck only lanes be implemented?

A: These are long-range projects. If the projects are feasible and funding is available, there are several additional steps to the process – additional environmental and engineering hurdles to clear. Best case, we'd be looking at ten years out.

